

Five minutes with Alexander Alvaro: “Compared to a decade ago, we have become ‘transparent citizens’”

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Alexander Alvaro, *Vice President of the European Parliament*, reflects recent efforts to preserve the Eurozone, the UK's relationship with the EU, and protecting citizen's freedoms in the digital age.



Do you think the Euro will be still with us in 5 years time?

Yes. Despite all the turmoil in the last years, the Euro has proven to be a strong currency. We have had to realize that the framework we previously built up to secure the currency has not been perfect. But in recent weeks we have reacted and I am confident that we are now moving in the right direction. We have created the European Stability Mechanism (the new permanent mechanism for bailouts in the Eurozone). We have introduced a new economic governance package and a new treaty that will guarantee the stability of the Euro in the upcoming years. New challenges may occur, but I am convinced that we have prepared a framework that will ensure the stability of our economies.

Some commentators feel that the UK's relationship with the EU is increasingly fragile. The *Economist* even called David Cameron's recent veto on renewing the EU treaties 'Europe's great divorce'. What do you make of the British position on European economic governance?

The UK's relationship with the EU has never been very simple. Nevertheless, I am sure that we will overcome the current difficulties. The UK is a very significant Member of the European Union and it is of utmost importance that we continue to cooperate over economic governance legislation. Global challenges can only be overcome if we find solutions based on mutual understanding and cooperation. Our aim is to minimize the risks of further debt crisis evolving again. The EU's motto is "United in diversity". The UK is aware of the strategic economic and political advantages of the European Union and I have no reason to doubt Mr Cameron's commitment to the EU.

In your Twitter biography you claim that your mission is to protect freedom in the digital age. Who or what is threatening this freedom?

Since the attacks of 9/11, we have seen anti-terrorism legislation surfacing all over Europe. Today, our telephone and internet communication is tracked while our flight details and our bank transfer data are forwarded to the US authorities. Compared to a decade ago, we have become "transparent citizens".

At the same time, as consumers we got used to the benefits that modern information and communication technologies have created. However, we have also witnessed new challenges as personal data has more and more become the 'currency' for services which are crucial for our every day lives. Yet this 'currency' constantly creates interesting opportunities, exciting business models and security risks alike.

Consequently, we need to modernize European data protection law in a way that allows consumers to continue having trust in technological advances as well as in their ability to determine how their personal data is processed. We will have to create new, easily enforceable standards to make sure that the fundamental rights of our citizens remain respected, while public security is ensured and innovative business models are not hampered, but further developed.

You are only 36 years old and yet you are already the vice president of the European Parliament. How did you manage this?

My group decided to nominate me after I had been working in the European Parliament since 2004. I don't think you can 'manage' to become elected vice president – but it helps if you have been engaged in parliamentary work, which I always have been.

We'd like to foster the European political discourse with our new blog. Do you think there is an audience for academic contributions on discussions about EU affairs?

Of course there is. I like your initiative. Europe needs motivated people to promote the European idea. Keep up the good work.

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About the author

Alexander Alvaro – *Vice President, European Parliament*

Alexander Alvaro has been a Member of the European Parliament for the Free Democratic Party of Germany, part of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, since 2004. He has served on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and is Vice-President of the Committee on Budgets. His main areas of interest are freedom, justice and security across Europe, as well as citizen's rights to mobility and privacy. He is also a member of the [EU40](#), the association of MEPs and EU officials under the age of 40.



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